Sacred language : Reformation, nationalism, and linguistic culture

Sinnemäki, Kaius Tatu-Kustaa

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I Building Lutheranism and National Identity

Kaius Sinnemäki
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6972-5216

Janne Saarikivi

Sacred Language: Reformation, Nationalism, and Linguistic Culture

Abstract

In this chapter we discuss religion and linguistic culture with reference to changes that took place as a result of the Reformation. We focus on religiously motivated beliefs about language and their effects on linguistic ideologies and the cultural myths that guide the linguistic behaviour of individuals and societies. In particular, we follow the path of the idea of a sacred language that emerged in early Middle Eastern monotheism and ultimately became the normative, prescriptive language of a nation state. We see a continuum in the linguistic ideologies related to the language of the divine revelation, which evolved into the idea of the universal language of the Church and learning, the sacred language of a national church acting as the patron of the king, and finally the standard language of a modern nation under nationalist ideologies. The common factor behind this development is the notion that language, as the bearer of the common good, lasts over a single generation and maintains a community that has a sacred character. This sense of holiness is reflected in the importance of safeguarding the norm of the language. Thus, the ideological concept of a standard language derives to a significant degree from the concept of language as holy, representing one of the most important substitutions of traditional religion in the Western hemisphere, nationalism and its universal mythology. In the context of this volume, we exemplify these developments especially with respect to Finnish language but also take the wider European context into consideration.

Basic concepts and outline

Every human community has ideas and beliefs about language that guide their linguistic behaviour.[1] In sociolinguistics, the beliefs, values, prejudices,

1 This paper has benefited greatly from the comments by the series editor of *Studia Fennica Historica* and the reviewers and also from discussions with several people. Earlier versions of the paper were presented at the seminar 'Finland 100, Finland 1000 – Shaping the Finnish Society,' at The Finnish Institute in Rome (Villa

and myths that a speech community attaches to language(s) and that guide the linguistic behaviour of the community members are labelled as language ideologies or, in a broader sense, linguistic culture.[2] The linguistic culture of a country, region, or social group has effects on language policy, types of literacy, and national identity, among other things.[3]

Self-evidently, one fundamental set of beliefs that people attach to their language may be related to religion.[4] While the contribution of linguistics to understanding religion has been discussed to some extent,[5] the importance of religion within a linguistic culture has been investigated less, and the authors of this chapter are not aware of any unified approach to this topic.

The defining of religious culture is a complicated task. Religion represents both oral and written, mythological and sacral, and ritual and magical beliefs and activities, but also a particular ethos of a human group with norms of ethical behaviour. Features of religion overlap with those of governing, as well as habits, knowledge, learning, and other societal activities that may be hard to understand from an outsider's perspective.

The notions of sacred or religion are very different in different languages and cultural contexts. It can be noted that in many languages, the concept of sacred is related to wholeness and healthiness (as the English *holy*, from a word stem meaning 'whole,' 'healthy'), or, on the contrary, setting apart or marking off (as the English *sacred* < Lat. *sacer*[6] and, ultimately, the Indo-European root **sek-* 'separate').[7] In yet other cases, it is related to large size or brightness (such as Russian *святой* 'sacred' from **swentu-*, originally likely just 'big').[8]

Lante), January 20, 2017, at the annual winter seminar of the Association for Religious Education Teachers in Finland, February 4, 2017 at Helsinki, at the public seminar 'Reformation Shaping Culture and Society in the Past and in the Present,' March 15–16, 2017 at the University of Turku, at the annual Church Days of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, May 19, 2017 at Turku, at the conference 'Protestantism and Negotiating Identities,' August 24–25, 2017 at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and at the 'Work in Progress' seminar of the Department of Linguistics, Stockholm University, November 23, 2017. We would like to thank the audiences of these events for many helpful comments. We are also grateful to Sonja Dahlgren, Maria Khachaturyan, Ulla Vanhatalo, and Max Wahlström for helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper. Both authors have received funding for this research from the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and Sinnemäki also from the Church Research Institute of Finland, which we gratefully acknowledge.

2 Schiffman (1996).

3 We prefer Schiffman's notion 'linguistic culture' over the related and widely used notion 'linguistic ideology' because of its broader scope and more down-to-earth nature.

4 Schiffman (1996: 55–74).

5 See Mooney (2010) and references.

6 Anttonen (2000: 41).

7 de Vaan (2008: 532).

8 See Saarikivi (2007: 327–331) whose etymology for the word *pyhä* differs from earlier explanations by Koivulehto (1973, 1989). See also Saarikivi (2017).

The concept of religion, in turn, is not present in many (old) language forms or linguistic cultures at all. The field it covers are considered as 'knowledge,' 'habits,' 'taboo,' 'worship' or 'governing.' The concept is extremely difficult to identify in a cross-cultural comparison, and many of the definitions of religion would cover phenomena such as sports and celebrity fan clubs, nationalism, or arts and entertainment.

Here we adopt the assumption that while a universal definition of sacred or religion is problematic, most – if not all – of human communities make a distinction between everyday matters and the matters of utmost importance that are to be approached with caution, endure over generations, hold society together, have relevance beyond the life of an individual, and may be connected with deities, the origins of the community, and the afterworld, as well as with mythology and ethics.

Obviously, many of these features are reflected in language use and the ideologies related to it. In the following, we demonstrate that a characteristic religious genre can be found in many of the world's languages. In the world's major religions, this idea of religious language use emerges in the form of collections of old texts written in a sacred, typically old-fashioned language used in rituals and spiritual teaching.

It is often noted that the Reformation altered the role of many vernacular language forms in Europe. Finnish, for instance, had no written language prior to the Reformation. Some vernacular languages were written before the Reformation, such as Italian, Catalan, German, and French, but even for many of these, especially German, the Reformation played a major part in bringing written language to the masses. It also significantly changed the position of English language in Britain.

The Reformers' incentive that every Christian should be able to read the Bible in their native language served as a motivation to translate it and other religious literature (such as catechisms, prayer books, and hymns) into the vernacular from the 16th century on. These texts and practices served as the basis for developing vernacular language in the fields of education, government, and science, especially in the framework of modern nationalism beginning in the 19th century.

Another viewpoint regarding this development is that over the course of time the Reformation transformed ideas about the church as sacred to an idea of sacred calling in everyday life, thus paving the way for one of the influential substitution today of nationalism for traditional religion. Although nationalism is a complex phenomenon, one of its main features is that it replaces the sacred universal church with a sacred state under a divine destiny. From the perspective of language, this meant that the national languages were not only considered important media for learning and communication, but also semiotic systems that held the nation together.

In this chapter, we seek to understand these developments from a comparative and historical perspective. First, we discuss the importance of religion to beliefs about language. We note that the conceptual system of large world religions is often safeguarded in the old languages in

which the canons of their sacred texts were written.[9] Second, we discuss the relationship between language and national identity. We claim that while Latin was replaced by vernaculars in European countries during the Reformation, the idea of understanding language as a divine instrument of unity and sacred semiotics did not disappear. The holy language of the Church was replaced by national languages that became sacred for a state church and subsequently for modern nationalism, which in turn replaced many functions of traditional religion. Third, we briefly provide examples of these changes in the context of linguistic cultures in different languages, focusing especially on Finland.

Sacred languages: The rise of a sacred code

Language may be considered sacred for different reasons. Typically, any act of religion or magic involves both a gesture or deed and a verbal action.[10] For instance, when sorcery is practiced, a deed is always followed by incantation.[11] In more organized forms of religion, acts of offering are combined with spoken formulae. In rites of passage, acts and words together form the fabric of a religious event. Religious actions are thus created by performative speech acts.[12]

Many oral cultures have specialized men or women who know the sacred texts (for instance, prayers and incantations) and recite them. A religious specialist can, among other things, master the language and wordings used for healing, praying, offering, etc. Often these texts are in a language form which is treated with particular care, strictly reserved for special contexts, and not revealed to outsiders. They may also contain taboo words that should only be uttered in a limited religious context.

For instance, while in the traditional Mari (Cheremis, in the Volga region) culture the transmission of religious knowledge is oral, there is a group of societal ceremony specialists (*kart*, plural *kart-wlak*) who can memorize and recite lengthy prayers to various gods rightly. These rite-specialists represent particular esteemed families, and also provide teaching on religious matters.[13] Some hunter-gatherer or nomadic societies also have genres of mythological songs or poetry performed on special religious occasions, such as the bear rites among the Ob-Ugric people (Khanty, Mansi), which represent a clearly marked type of language use both lexically and structurally.[14]

The emergence of a genre of ritual language would seem to be almost a cultural universal that can be observed in a variety of contexts.[15] This is reflected in the fact that religious specialists are among the first professions to

9 Schiffman (1996).
10 Ostler (2016: xv–xvi).
11 Malinowski (1948).
12 Austin (1962).
13 Toidybekova (1997).
14 See Karjalainen (1918); Bartens (1986).
15 See Sawyer (1999: 23–43).

emerge in any society. Typically, the only specialized profession in a hunter-gatherer society is that of a shaman, and it is a part of their profession to know the relevant ritualist practices of language use. In the case of Finnish (or Uralic), the only professional denomination that can be reconstructed in early protolanguages of the Uralic family is the word *noita* 'shaman' (< **nojta*, with cognates in Saami and Ob-Ugrian languages).[16]

In organized religions, a central reason for defining a language as sacred is based on the assumed divine origins of the sacred texts. This otherworldly character may be fostered by their linguistic form, which is either peculiar or outright unintelligible and understood only by trained specialists, the 'priest-philologists' (to use the term advanced by V. Voloshinov).[17] Their task is to read, study, and explain the holy text and thus guard the purity of the belief system and, ultimately, the unity of the whole religious community. Often such sacred language is used solely by the religious specialists. Some examples include Sanskrit in Hinduism, Classical Arabic in Islam, and Biblical Hebrew in Judaism. Another reason for treating a language as sacred is for societal reasons, such as for safeguarding the continuity and unity of the group. Latin in the pre-1960s Catholic Church is a good example of this, being the liturgical language of the Church until that point. It was also widely used among the learned classes and not only by religious specialists. It remained as the language of science in Protestant Europe far beyond the Reformation: in Finland, for instance, university teaching was given partly in Latin until the early 19th century. However, the functions of Latin that lasted so long in science, administration, and governing were related to and largely emerged from its position as the sacred language of the Catholic Church and from its well-established role in medieval Europe. Those functions were slowly replaced by vernaculars in different parts of the continent, as their position grew stronger especially after the Reformation.

These different aspects of sacred language may naturally be intertwined. If a language is believed to have an otherworldly character, this belief is likely to have social and psychological consequences, such as enforcing unity in the religious community that employs the texts written in it. In the following, we briefly discuss beliefs about language in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam and then focus more on developments in Christianity.

Holy languages in world religions

Both Hinduism and Buddhism developed in Southeast Asia, but the linguistic cultures they have fostered differ from one another. Whereas Hinduism retains many features of an ethnically associated religion using Sanskrit and the languages derived from it, Buddhism has developed into a variety of regional traditions with different linguistic bases.

In the sacred Vedic hymns of Hinduism, language was personified as a goddess, and one later commentator even suggested that the 'universe is ultimately of linguistic nature.'[18] It is thus understandable why Hinduism

16 Itkonen & Kulonen (1992–2000, vol. II: xx).
17 Voloshinov (1973: 74).
18 See references in Itkonen (1992: 6).

has been preoccupied with language and why Sanskrit, the language of the Vedas, came to be considered divine.[19] The Vedas were originally oral, but because the everyday language changed from that used in the sacred texts it became important to preserve their correct pronunciation.[20] This motivation to safeguard the correct, old-fashioned pronunciation of the texts boosted the rich linguistic tradition of Hinduism, culminating in the grammar of Pāṇini (roughly 400 BCE), which was quite likely the first grammatical treatise in history. This heightened interest in linguistics manifested in the emergence of grammatical description, in the learning of Sanskrit, and in its preservation as a spoken language among the religious upper class. On the other hand, translating the Hindu texts was practiced only in modern emigrant contexts.[21]

While Sanskrit was used to also write sacred Buddhist texts, the tradition of preserving texts in that language alone was rejected. Alongside it, Prakrit, Middle Aryan, and Pali were also used early on.[22] This textual multilingualism encouraged the translation and usage of other languages in Buddhism.[23] The relative openness of Buddhism toward multilingualism is reflected in multiple independent traditions that emerged in different linguistic contexts: for example, Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayāna), Southeast Asian Buddhism (Theravāda), and East Asian Buddhism (Mahāyāna).[24]

In the monotheistic tradition of the Middle East, the idea of a sacred scripture and language originated in Judaism. The Bible was largely written in Biblical Hebrew,[25] and the idea of Hebrew as a sacred language of Judaism and its use in religious contexts preserved the skills in Hebrew during the centuries when it was not spoken as a mother tongue. In the 20th century, the Hebrew language was again turned into a state language and a mother tongue for more than six million people. This recreation of Modern Hebrew as a spoken language illustrates well the main thesis of this chapter, namely, that sacred language in religious and nationalist terms represents an ideological continuum.

While Biblical Hebrew was sacred for the Jews, the Jews were open to using other languages in religious contexts as well.[26] The Hebrew Bible was translated into Koine Greek already in the 3rd century BCE (the Septuagint) and later into Aramaic as well (the Targum). In line with the tradition regarding the divine inspiration of holy scripture, the Greek Old Testament came to be thought of as inspired scripture as well. One myth on the origin of the translation stipulates that 70 translators (70 = *septuaginta* in Latin) independently of each other made a translation that was alike, even to the

19 Aklujkar (1996: 72).
20 Itkonen (1992: 10).
21 See Pandharipande (2013).
22 Spolsky (2003: 83).
23 Nattier (1990).
24 See, e.g., Ostler (2016).
25 Sawyer (1999: 26–30). Some parts of the Hebrew Bible, such as half of the book of Daniel, were written in Old Aramaic.
26 Sawyer (1999: 30–31).

smallest detail.[27] Such histories regarding Bible translations would later emerge in various Christian contexts as well.

The idea of sacred scripture was adopted from Judaism by both Islam and Christianity. In Islam, the Qur'an was passed to Mohammed in the Arabic language.[28] Dogma stipulates that only the Arabic Qur'an possesses the real sacred script, which existed with God already before the creation of the world. The dogma that the Qur'an is the only thing that was not created by God only extends to the Arabic Qur'an, as all translations are human work. For this reason, Classical Arabic is highly sacred for Muslims. Although the Qur'an has been translated into many languages, there is fierce opposition against accepting any translations as sacred; they are typically considered mere commentaries.[29]Arabic also plays a central role in Islamic rituals: reciting the Qur'an in Arabic is held to generate religious merit, while reciting it in other languages is not considered proper prayer[30] or may be even prohibited altogether.[31] This is reflected also in the spread of Arabic language and literacy to the Muslim world. Across vast areas, such as northern Africa, Mesopotamia, and Syria, speakers of other languages shifted to Arabic and still others became bilingual. Countries like Iran and Pakistan adopted the Arabic script together with large amounts of Arabic vocabulary of predominantly religious content. Up to the present day, most Muslims around the world learn Arabic to some extent in order to be able to recite their prayers properly.

Language of scripture in Christianity until the Reformation

In Christianity, the situation regarding language is the most complex among the world's major religions. Language manifests in the creation story of the Church at Pentecost: in Acts 2, the disciples receive the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in languages that they did not understand, and they are understood by outside observers. In addition, in the Great Commission[32] Jesus specifically commands the disciples to take the Gospel to all the nations.[33] Both stories thus deal closely with language.[34]

For Christians, God's Word was manifest in the person of Christ, not in a divine text, as in Judaism or Islam. Though called Holy Scripture, the New Testament is generally not understood to be the word of God as such, but testimony of the Word of God, in the person of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note in this context that the words of Christ were originally preserved in

27 See Dimont (2004).
28 Morrow (2014: 253).
29 See also Schiffman (1996: 68–71); Ruthven (2006: 90).
30 Afnan (2006: 657); Sawyer (1999: 24).
31 Sawyer (1999: 24).
32 Matthew 28: 16–20.
33 To be precise the Great Commission does not directly state that the message should be translated into other languages. While a universal faith will necessarily be translated and culturally interpreted (Ostler 2016: xvi), it then depends on the religious culture and dogma whether those translations will be treated as sacred.
34 Hastings (1997: 194–195).

a Greek translation, not in Aramaic, the original mother tongue of Jesus. However, Christian theologians argued early on that Christ is a word (λόγος in Greek) that existed before creation (cf. John 1).

This abstract character of God's word meant also that Christianity was not confined to any particular language community. From early on, Christianity was a multicultural (Jewish and Greek) movement. In the words of St. Paul: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.'[35] There is thus indifference to characteristics such as ethnicity, language, social status, gender, etc., but not rejection of them.[36] Instead, regarding ethnicity and language, there is at the core of Christianity a sense of destigmatizing vernacular cultures and a radical cultural pluralism.[37]

Nevertheless, the idea of holy scripture and a holy book was transferred from Judaic tradition to Christianity in a similar manner to Islam, creating an array of sacred translations. The translation movement within Christianity began right away. Many parts of the New Testament emerged on the basis of the Aramaic tradition in Greek. Most notably, the Gospels of Mark and Matthew bear witness to Aramaic origins, and according to Christian tradition the Gospel of Matthew was first written in Aramaic but then translated into Greek[38] (although the mainstream view in research now is that the texts were written originally in Greek).[39] Many Jews in first-century CE Palestine used Koine Greek instead of Aramaic.[40]

Further translations soon followed, Latin by Jerome and Gothic by Wulfila in the 4th century. These and many subsequent translations would be characterized as inspired or sacred. Yet, they would be incomprehensible for generations to come, who nevertheless long considered them as the unalterable norm of religious mythology and terminology. Thus, the Catholic Church worldwide has reserved a special place for the Latin Bible from the 5th century onwards up to the present day, regardless of the fact that Latin disappeared as a spoken language long ago. The Orthodox Churches still widely use the Old Greek New Testament, which is largely incomprehensible for Modern Greek speakers; in a similar manner, the Old Church Slavonic translation of the New Testament (in the 9th century) is used in church services in Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia, even though it is now mostly incomprehensible to the speakers of the modern languages.

Many Protestant revival movements also prefer older translations. Some branches of the Laestadian revival movement in Finland, for instance, use the old Church Bible from 1776. There is also a Protestant movement to support the use of the King James Bible (published in 1611) in the English-speaking world instead of newer translations.

The early budding of linguistic pluralism in the Christian Church did not last very long, especially in the West. After the Vulgate, there was almost

35 Gal 3:28. Translation according to the New Revised Standard Version.
36 See Huttunen (2015: 101–102).
37 Sanneh (1989: 1).
38 Sawyer (1999: 83).
39 We are grateful to Niko Huttunen for pointing this out to us.
40 Porter (1998).

a thousand-year gap before the next full Bible was translated into another language for the Western Church. Portions of the Bible, however, were translated into many European languages. In 880, Pope John III decreed that both scripture and liturgy may be conducted in any language, including Slavic, which Methodius and Cyril had worked in at that time.[41] But Pope Stephen V, immediately following, turned against the use of the vernacular in liturgy and translations; this happened largely as a side-effect of demands for conformity in church practice toward the Western tradition and for authority to be given to the educated church elite.[42]

In the 11th century, Pope Gregory VII emphasized conformity to Roman practice even more by arguing that 'sacred scripture in certain places should be hidden, lest, if it should appear open to all, by chance it might be [...] so misunderstood by those of little intelligence that it might lead them into error.'[43] Thus, if God's will was to conceal scripture, it was only sensible to conduct liturgies in a language that was unintelligible to the masses. The difficult and more obscure parts of scripture were considered open only to the learned. This paved the way for the strengthening of the elitist power structures by giving a unique status to those who were educated to understand the scriptures in Latin.[44] Because education at that time was dependent on private tutors, it was only accessible by wealthy people. Latin thus increasingly changed from being a medium used for understanding religious matters into an expert language that kept dogma and church power out of the reach of laymen. Authority in the Church and religion remained in the hands of the clergy, enforcing a greater degree of unity in a geographically expanding Christian community.[45]

After the 12th century, the major concerns of the Western Church shifted to fighting against heresies, but the central role of Latin prevailed in both liturgy and theology. Self-produced translations were allowed for personal use, but their public reading was usually prohibited.[46] Public reading of translations was a common part of sermons in medieval Catholic masses, however; the passage was first read in Latin and then from the translation.[47] But not just any translation was allowed. The Waldensians, for instance, who translated portions of the Bible into many European languages and aimed at teaching the laypeople, were considered heretics. Sometimes even possessing a copy or an extract of the Bible in a vernacular language was considered a sign of heresy and a reason for being burned at the stake.[48] Translators like

41 The translation and the process of creating the new Slavic alphabet were accompanied by the oldest and most important non-translated Old Church Slavonic text by Chernorizets Hrabar, who defended the alphabet and its further development (Vlasto 1970: 177). We are grateful to Max Wahlström for bringing this issue to our attention.

42 Geary (2013: 50–55).

43 Gregory VII (1923: 474). Quoted in Geary (2013: 53).

44 Sawyer (1999: 24, 77).

45 Geary (2013).

46 Deanesly (1920: 18–19).

47 We are grateful for an anonymous reviewer for contributing this information.

48 Deanesly (1920).

William Tyndale (1494–1536) were sentenced to death for having translated the Bible into the vernacular for laypeople outside the official Church.[49] It seems that a categorical ban on vernacular translations did not exist, but many specific translations were nonetheless prohibited, and many were approached with suspicion.[50]

There is no doubt that Latin gradually became a sacred language for the Catholic Church in terms of policy.[51] However, its sacredness did not stem from a belief in its divine inspiration but was rather a consequence of protecting the purity of the dogma by requiring prolonged education of the clergy and by enforcing greater unity in the Church. The Catholic Church was not a monolingual community, of course. Vernaculars were already used well before the Reformation – even in Finland[52] – but they never replaced Latin, which remained the language of the liturgy of the Catholic Church and the Bible until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Catholic missions also differed from the later Protestant missions in that they placed emphasis on translating the Catechism into vernaculars but not the Bible, except after the 1960s.

The situation was somewhat different in the East.[53] The Bible was translated into several languages during the first millennium CE: for instance, Syriac (an Aramaic dialect spoken in Edessa), Coptic (in Egypt), Ge'ez (Ethiopia), Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Old Armenian, Old Georgian, and Caucasian Albanian.[54] Since the split of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church in the 11th century, the Eastern Churches have never been linguistically uniform, and they have allowed vernaculars to be used in liturgy as well as in translations of scriptures.[55] While the Eastern Churches have not been particularly active in producing new translations of the Bible, their less centralized structures, with several independent churches, has nevertheless resulted in a less strict relationship between language and religion than that prevailing in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Reformation and the vernacular

There are two competing processes in many religious communities: the preservation of doctrinal purity and the unity of the community, on the one hand, and the need to understand the sacred texts and doctrine, on the other (Figure 1). Translations that alter the understanding and expression of a religion may prove harmful for unity and continuity, because languages never have identical semantics and the metaphors typical of each language are culturally bound.[56] But as language evolves, the more unintelligible

49 McGrath (2001: 87–88).
50 Kienzle (1998: 265).
51 Geary (2013).
52 See Salonen (this volume).
53 Sawyer (1999: 55).
54 Beerle-Moor (2015: 188); see also Sawyer (1999: 86–89).
55 Spolsky (2003: 84).
56 Ostler (2016: 116–118); see also Idström & Piirainen (2012).

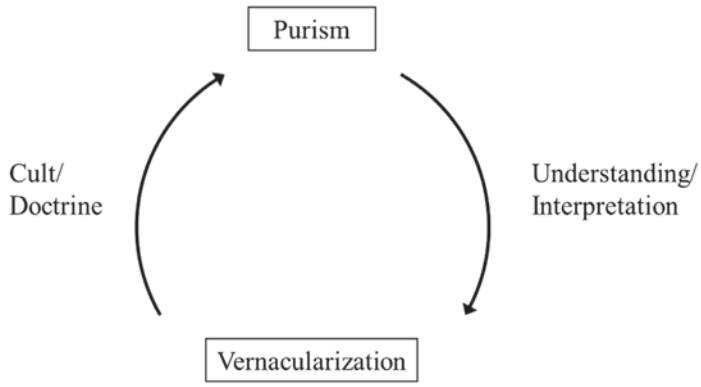

Figure 1. Tug-of-war between doctrinal purity and vernacular understanding.

sacred texts eventually become, and this creates a pressure to express the religion in a modern vernacular.[57] This conflict is basically unsolvable, and the world religions, at different periods in history, differ from each other in the amount of willingness vis-à-vis cultural evolution and assimilation, or in the degree of cultural assimilation required of converts.

In the Reformation, this tug-of-war tilted strongly toward vernacularisation but with a strong tendency toward greater doctrinal purity as well. Two important changes paved the way for this somewhat paradoxical process. First, vernacular languages slowly began to be used in secular contexts in the Late Middle Ages. They gradually became adopted for regular media in law courts, aristocratic institutions, and chancelleries. This happened for the purpose of record-keeping by the government,[58] but also because the secular powers wanted to limit the Church's power. Latin was increasingly identified as the language of the Church and considered 'complicated, hidden, and susceptible to manipulation and deception.'[59] Language choices were, therefore, a political issue, and undoubtedly they paved the way for religious reforms.[60]

Second, as a result of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, many Byzantine scholars fled to the West, bringing with them numerous Greek manuscripts, including those of the New Testament, which scholars in the West had previously had no access to. This accelerated the revival of learning classical Greek.[61] Based on New Testament manuscripts, Erasmus prepared an edition of the Greek New Testament that antedated the texts that had been available to Jerome when he translated the Vulgate. The Reformers thought that the original Gospels had been obscured in the later manuscripts and translations, necessitating a return to ancient Greek manuscripts. They even saw the fall

57 Ostler (2016: xvi).
58 Safran (2008).
59 Geary (2013: 59).
60 Geary (2013: 56–59).
61 Eire (2016: 70).

of Constantinople as providential for the purpose of renewing the Western Church.[62] Moreover, there was a shift in reconstructing the scriptures based on historical evidence from Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, rather than solely on the Church's authority.[63] This shift meant a continuing need for a priest-philologist elite, who could understand those manuscripts.

A key change provoked by the Reformation was emphasis on the authority of scriptures (*sola scriptura*) instead of the Church's tradition. This was coupled with the idea of the priesthood of all believers, which naturally was related to translating the Bible into vernacular languages. The turn toward vernaculars broke the link between Latin and religion and strongly affected the development of national cultures and languages in the West, as the break from a transnational Church strengthened national sovereignty in relation to linguistic, political, and religious issues.

For many European languages, the vernacular Bible was among the first books published, paving the way for vernacular written cultures. In many cases these publications had predecessors in vernacular manuscripts, even if these were not generally available to the masses. Luther published a New Testament in German in 1522 and poured out short publications in the early 1520s, both for the clergy and for the common people. Soon thereafter, the New Testament was published in Danish in 1524, in Swedish in 1526, in French in 1530, in Finnish in 1548, etc.[64] These translations, used in preaching and private study, were widely accepted as Holy Scripture. The Reformers thus produced 'a variety of "vulgates"' to be used not just by the highly educated but also by the common people.[65]

These publications also served as a base for a novel emphasis on lay education with the aim to enable people to read the Bible themselves.[66] Since God now spoke in the laymen's language, the Bible was no longer the property of the papacy but belonged to the people, as Luther had hoped.[67] The German peasant revolts in 1524–1526, however, made the Reformers worried that untutored Bible reading could cause social unrest. So, only a few years after his translation of the German Bible, Luther made a conceptual reversal: reading of the Bible was not so recommended anymore. Instead, Luther began to write catechisms that he declared the people's Bible. Catechism thus became a tool for enforcing doctrinal purity in the emerging Protestant tradition, on the one hand, and imposing congregational unity in the new Protestant churches, on the other hand, in much the same spirit as the medieval Catholic Church.[68]

62 Thompson (1996: 31).
63 Ostler (2016: 241–251); see also Eire (2016: 70).
64 See the chapters by Salonen; Laine (this volume).
65 Safran (2008: 174).
66 See the chapters by Salonen; Laine (this volume).
67 Safran (2008: 174).
68 Baron (2015: 25–26).

The rise of vernacular standards and making the foundations of nationalism

On national identity and the rise of vernacular standard language

It has long been agreed in the social sciences that language is a central factor that contributes to national identity, along with shared history, religion, and ethnicity.[69] The Reformation, along with changing ideas related to languages, arguably had important consequences to national identities as well. The Reformation quickly spread to vast numbers of people through the new technology of the printing press. The Reformers' activities resulted in the growth of newspapers and an early public sphere in Europe.[70] These developments led to the further need to standardize the vernacular written languages. This movement largely began in the 16th century and culminated in 19th-century nationalism. Standardization, on the other hand, created what Benedict Anderson coined as the 'unified fields of communication,' which were below Latin but above the spoken vernaculars.[71]

By its very nature, standardization levels down personal, regional, and class variation, and thus it paves the way for modern society, which allows social mobility and individual choice of identities. Speakers of different dialects could now understand each other through the standardized written medium. Over the course of time, the standardized vernaculars completely replaced Latin and came to be the fundament of many evolving European nations.

Raising the status of the vernacular democratized linguistic cultures in Europe and marked a drastic change in myths and beliefs related to languages. English, for one, had been considered barbarous, a language of the peasants and 'incapable of expressing anything other than the crudest and most basic of matters,' 'incapable of conveying the subtle undertones of diplomacy, the fine distinctions of philosophy,' and 'incapable of expressing the deep and the nuanced truths of the Bible in particular.'[72] But beginning in the mid-15th century and culminating in the 17th century, it transformed into a language of governing, nobility, and high culture. Simultaneously, Britain turned from a combination of papal and king power towards a modern sovereign state, and subsequently, took the course to become an international empire with a British vernacular as the sole official language. In Finland, as in most of Eastern Europe, a similar process of making the language of peasants into a language fitting all social domains took place only in the 19th century in connection with nationalism and folk education.[73]

The American colonies of Britain would follow the liberal and nationalist ideologies by creating a country that was neutral from the point of view of traditional religion but dependent on a shared ethos of nationalism. This

69 See, e.g., Flora et al. (1999); Hroch (2012); Finell et al. (this volume).
70 Woodberry (2012: 249–251).
71 Anderson (2006: 46).
72 McGrath (2001: 24, 27, 33).
73 Huumo (2005).

was manifested in semiotics of the pledge of allegiance to the American flag, military cemeteries for the sacrificial victim for the country, memorials erected for past presidents, etc. Albeit being multicultural from early on, the U.S. would experience a period where the unifying role of the English language was stressed as fundamental for the nation, while the use of other languages would be considered a threat or suspicious activity.[74]

In the German-speaking countries, the period between Luther's activities (in the early 16th century) and the Westphalian peace treaty (in 1648) meant a shift from papal and principal power to an increasingly sovereign state power that functioned in the German language. Although divided into various states, the German lands turned to a common literary standard of German, beginning from the mid-17th century in the northern states. Up to the mid-18th century, this standard, based on Luther's translation of the Bible, would be used even in the Catholic regions and replace the earlier *Oberdeutsche Schreibsprache*. From this emerged the nationalist ideologies that would sacralise the German nation and seek its unity over state boundaries. This movement would be connected especially with the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the founding of the Rheinbund by Napoleon, and accentuating Prussian efficiency and progress as opposed to Austrian backwardness and Catholicism. Particular interest turned to German vernaculars and folklore, which were considered to represent the divinely inspired *Volksseele* and *Naturpoesie*, as opposed to artificial *Kunstpoesie*. In this movement, German thinkers, such as Herder and Fichte, strongly emphasized the ultimate importance of language to the nation.[75]

In France, the French language was made an official language, ousting Latin in state governance in 1539. In 1634, the French Academy was founded, with the main task of protecting and cultivating the French language. The seal of the Academy depicted the text 'À l'immortalité,' pointing to the immortality of the French language that the Academy should guard. France, unlike Germany, was a unitary state with a single king and central administration. It should be noted, though, that by this time French was not widely spoken by the rural population outside Île-de-France and the northern regions, thus indicating that the role of language was also a policy oriented toward unifying the nation.

In the French Revolution, a new type of a state emerged that substituted religious worship with the cult of the human and the state. The newly erected Madeleine Church was refurbished into the Pantheon, where French national heroes would be buried and honoured. Although the subsequent rulers of France, including Napoleon, would have a considerably more tolerant attitude toward the Church, the secular nature of the French state prevails up to the present day. On that basis, forms of national worship would emerge, including honouring of the flag, the constitution, the national anthem, the Unknown Soldier, etc. A specific place in the system of nationalist concepts would be reserved for the French language, which, in

74 Zolberg & Long (1999).
75 See, e.g., Smith (2000).

the linguistic mythology of the following generations, would be praised for its logical structure, beauty, and clarity.[76]

In Eastern Europe, similar developments took place that, during the 19th century, created new full-fledged literary languages and countries with nationalist ideologies.[77] Typically, the development of literary language and the widening of its functions preceded the emergence of local nationalist ideologies, and national independence then confirmed these trajectories by establishing a nationalist cult in arts, symbols (flags, anthems, national heroes), holidays, and cemeteries and other sanctuaries. The three main institutions involved in establishing national identity were schools, newspaper media, and the army, all organized by means of a national language. Through these institutions, the nationalist identity was transferred to the masses, and the earlier predominantly local and religious identities receded into the background. A special role in this development was played by the literary standard of the language taught in schools and used in media at the expense of local spoken vernaculars, which in turn were often ridiculed or considered to be subject to foreign influences to be avoided.

In Finland, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the basis for the use of vernacular as a literary language had also developed already in the 16th century at the time of the Reformation, even though its full-fledged use began only later. The New Testament was translated into Finnish in 1548, accompanied by the Catechism and basic learning tools. At that time, the territory of Finland formed the eastern part of the Swedish kingdom, and a similar translation had been made into Swedish just shortly before.

During the 17th century, it was customary for the Swedish state to provide teaching in the basics of reading and Christianity at confirmation school.[78] Thus, Sweden was probably the first country in the world to require elementary reading skills of the whole population. However, writing skills were not required; this was a peculiar characteristic of Nordic countries. Even as late as the 1890s in Finland, then an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, only about 20% of the Lutheran population could both read and write, while nearly everyone was able to read.[79] Overall, the Orthodox Finns were better at writing than Lutheran Finns.

The Lutheran emphasis on reading skills and catechism had distinct societal effects in the Finnish population. While the Lutheran Church encouraged reading, it also emulated the Catholic practice of controlling the degree to which the people understood the Bible themselves or could spread their own interpretations through writing. Significant changes to these practices started to take place only during the 19th century as a result of the nationalist awakening, when Finnish national identity began to be constructed consciously, and in connection with the Pietist movement, which encouraged laypeople to read the Bible.

76 See, e.g., Schiffman (1996: 75–123); Oakes (2001).
77 See Hroch (1996, 2012).
78 See chapters by Salonen; Laine; Niemi & Sinnemäki (this volume).
79 Lehmuskallio (1983: 44).

The creation and standardization of the vernaculars all over Europe paved the way for a 'national awakening,' but it was also fuelled by the availability of vernacular Bible translations and other subsequent vernacular literature.[80] The emerging 'print languages' functioned as the foundation for national consciousness. As famously put by Benedict Anderson, it is written language that helps people create an 'imagined community' of those who can communicate by means of it; this community crosses the boundaries of local dialects, enabling greater social mobility and identity-building that is not confined to the local community.[81]

Modern nationalism and its sacred languages

Many social scientists agree that modern nationalism inherited features formerly associated with religion. In a similar manner to traditional religions, nationalism has myths and sacred symbols and it provides a transcendental meaning of life for an individual, albeit not in the immortality of a soul but in the immortality of the people (and their language), which also represents a mythological genealogy of the individual.[82] Carlton Hayes, the pioneering specialist on the research of nationalism, considered it a powerful modern religion that inherited many of the central symbols of Christianity, such as anthems and sacred cloths (the flag). He noted that European nationalism first emerged in Christian communities and that many of the practices related to it imitated Christian habits. In 19th-century nationalism, a new type of nationalist worship emerged that displayed the features of religion but was centred on concepts related to nation rather than concepts related to deities. In Hayes' words, nationalism has 'the patron or the personification of [the] fatherland;' 'speculative theology or mythology' describing the 'eternal past [...] and everlasting future' of the nation; canon of holy scripture; feasts, fasts, processions, pilgrimages, and holy days; and supreme sacrifice. Related to this, Hayes had a negative idea of nationalism, which he saw as representing tribal selfishness and vainglory.[83]

This analogy between religion and nationalism can be extended to discuss the role of language in nationalism. While early national identities were based on a religious understanding of the nation as God's chosen people, over the course of time language effectually replaced religion's role as the bedrock for nationhood.[84] As suggested by the sociologist Rogers Brubaker, in the era of modern nationalism, language came to be seen as the 'chief criterion and main cultural substrate of nationhood.'[85] Where traditional religions have their sacred languages, the centrality of language to nationalism makes it plausible to see a vernacular language, especially the standard official vernacular, as sacred to a nation state.

80 Hastings (1997).
81 Anderson (2006: 46).
82 Safran (2008).
83 Hayes (2016[1960]: 164–168).
84 Safran (2008).
85 Brubaker (2013: 13).

In addition, it has often been traditional religion that has legitimized the sacred status of language for nationalism. Variants of modern Christianity often represent a mixture of universal Christian and local nationalistic values, including language-related myths. In the 19th century, for instance, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Serbian all claimed to represent an unbroken continuity with Old Church Slavonic,[86] considered to be of great value for national identity. In Protestant countries, the bond between the state, Church, and language became very intimate, and the origin of all of these were considered sacred. For instance, in Sweden, the leading Protestant nation of the 17th century, many theories were developed by Olaus Rudbeck, the most important historian of the time, to prove the biblical origins of the Swedish people and their languages.

The role of language for national identity may vary, depending on the degree of multilingualism and the degree of perceived or imagined threat from other languages. One of the more serious threats to national identity and national integrity seems to be peril of the common language. Threats to language are felt to be especially strong when language has a unifying function in the community. In Finland, this idea was expressed succinctly by Mathias Castrèn, the first professor of Finnish language, who stated in his inaugural public lecture in 1851 – at a time of early waves of national awakening – that it was not only the national culture that would stand or fall with language but the whole existence as a nation.[87]

We could assume that such threats were especially felt in monolingual nation states. However, 'monolingual' states seem to be historically a product of nationalism or large empires.[88] Even Western states are not completely monolingual, despite centuries of striving for unification. Linguistic diversity is often concealed by the promotion of the official language and through linguistic purism.

Linguistic purism is closely related to the standardization of languages,[89] and it can be viewed as a secular analogue to doctrinal purism in traditional religions. In the United States, for instance, possible threats to the status of English are often referred to in similar contexts as the cultural threats posed by a foreign religion, such as Islam.[90] France, while being a markedly non-committal state regarding religion and conviction, is simultaneously the country with probably the worst reputation regarding minority language protection in Europe. In a country without a common religious identity, the schooling, media, and administration functioning exclusively in French have provided a powerful tool for the unifying of the people and bringing their identities closer to each other. It is perhaps no surprise that France, a pivotal example of modern secularism, is also well known for its exceptionally purist attitude and guarding of the French language against foreign influence.[91]

86 Safran (2008: 174–176).
87 Paunonen (1976: 314).
88 Evans (2010).
89 See Brunstad (2003) and references there.
90 Zolberg & Long (1999).
91 Oakes (2001).

Finnish standard language and nationalist heritage

In the following, we discuss the relationship between language and ethnonational identity in Finland. We argue that although the state functions bilingually in Finnish and Swedish in Finland, there is a close linkage between language and national identity and that in the construction of the Finnish language standard there are signs of the same kind of sacred character of language as in officially monolingual nation states with a much longer tradition of standard language. Although there is no space in this chapter to deal with other officially bi- or multilingual countries like Belgium, Switzerland, or Canada, we may assume on a general level that they may share some common features with the history of Finland as regards language nationalism.[92]

Standard Finnish and national identity

When Finland became a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809, Swedish remained the language of administration and prestige, while Finnish was stigmatized, especially in the eyes of the elite.[93] The common people spoke local dialects of Finnish and there was neither a standard spoken Finnish that was developed nor shared Finnish identity, as far as it is possible to reconstruct the situation of that period.

In the first half of the 19th century, European nationalist-romantic currents also reached Finland and began to stir national awakening in the Swedish-speaking upper classes, especially among university students and teachers. The intelligentsia began to promote a distinct Finnish national identity. In this nationalist movement, language became a crucial aspect of political debate and organization, notwithstanding the fact that the country did not really have a Finnish-speaking learned class. The differences between the first political parties in Finland were related to different opinions about Finnish language and culture: the Fennoman party promoted Finnish and the Svecoman party Swedish. The ideas of the Fennoman movement were formulated by J. W. Snellman, according to whom 'the only way Finland could make its own contribution to the history of the world was by the creation of a Finnish-speaking civilization expressed through a national literature in Finnish.'[94]

The nationalist movement escalated in so-called language strife, which lasted from roughly the second half of the 19th century well beyond the declaration of independence in 1917. A crucial role in the battle was the support of the Russian crown for the Fennoman movement. Of the four estates (nobility, burghers, clergy, and peasants), the clergy and the peasants supported Finnish language, but since three out of four were needed

92 A recent report by the *Pew Research Center*, February 1, 2017, suggests that this could be the case at least in Canada, where language is seen as more critical to national identity than birthplace, culture, or other relevant criteria. See also Finell et al. (this volume).

93 Hult & Pietikäinen (2014: 2–3).

94 Lindgren et al. (2011: 22).

to resolve the issue, tensions continued. The resolution was to have both Finnish and Swedish as official languages of the state.[95] The co-official status was first declared in 1863 with a twenty-year transition period, and again in a carefully prepared and detailed way in the 1922 language law, which had many concrete formulations to protect Swedish-speakers who were in the minority. However, the situation was resolved only in the Second World War, when speakers of both languages fought together against a common enemy. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland did not seem to have a strong official opinion about the language strife, but most of the clergy and especially the Pietist Awakened faction (*heränäisyys* in Finnish) supported the Fennoman movement.[96]

In principle, nationalist ideology emphasizes language and vernacular literature as cornerstones of national identity and nation-building but simultaneously tends to create new normative contexts, which, deviating from vernacular language use, are labelled as 'national' and therefore important.

These circumstances are clearly visible in the creation of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* in the 1830s and 1840s. The epic was compiled by Elias Lönnrot, who collected oral poetry especially from Northern Karelia. The collection had a great impact on the emerging Finnish literary standard while not actually being Finnish from the point of view of language. The epic was instead based on Northern Karelian (a Finnic language closely related to Finnish) folk poems, which were largely unintelligible for the admittedly tiny audience that was able to read Finnish literature in the 1840s.

Notwithstanding this state of affairs, the *Kalevala* soon became a kind of holy book for Finnish nationalism. A large amount of vocabulary entered the literary language from its poems, and Kalevalaic themes became extremely popular in the arts. Painting related to the themes of the *Kalevala* and also its runes were used to illustrate the premises of such official buildings as the Students' Union House (*Ylioppilastalo* in Finnish) or the National Museum (*Kansallismuseo* in Finnish). It was no problem in this connection that much of the *Kalevala* was in fact hardly intelligible for a lay Finn (this is reflected, for instance, in the fact that special dictionaries of the *Kalevala* have been published to facilitate its reading).[97] Even at present, the themes related to Kalevalaic mythology occupy an important position in Finnish nationalism.

When schools with Finnish as the language of instruction were established in the latter half of the 19th century, quite a few Swedish-speaking aristocratic and other well-off families also started to shift their home language and often also surnames into Finnish. As a result, by the early 20th century there was also a Finnish-speaking elite in Finland, alongside the old Swedish-speaking cadre.[98]

Because the new Finnish-speaking elite had shifted language, they had little connection with regional Finnish dialects, which meant that their

95 Lavery (2006: 58–61).
96 Huhta (2007); Juva (1950).
97 See Turunen (1949); Jussila (2009).
98 Lindgren et al. (2011).

speech included many features that were alien to traditional forms of Finnish. From then on, however, these features would define the standard. As a curious example, consider the development that took place in the representation of the dental fricative sound *ð* (the sound in the English article *the*). Through the influence of Swedish, it first began to be represented in writing by the letter *d*, and later the sound itself began to be pronounced as *d* in standard Finnish. This pronunciation was non-existent in all dialects that, in addition to *ð*, had *r*, *l*, or loss that was also represented as *h* and *j* in some positions. The new pronunciation was due to the Swedish superstrate, as the Swedish represented *d* but did not possess *ð*.[99] In addition, even the sounds *b* and *g* were now taken into standard language even though only a handful of Finnish dialects actually employed them and for most speakers they were (and partly still remain) hard to pronounce. Presently, the inability to pronounce these phonemes is often ridiculed as a sign of backwardness and the rural origins of a person.

The changes were evident also in morphology. Finnish is rich in declensional and conjugational types, and there is a lot of variation in declension, conjugation, and derivation between the dialects. Now, a particular form would be considered correct in writing and learned language, whereas the use of other forms would be discouraged. Especially conservative forms were chosen as the basis of the morphology of the literary language. As the end product, the literary language came to have many morphological rules *ad hoc*.

Moreover, the late 19th-century influx of Eastern Finnish words from the *Kalevala* and folk poetry meant that the lexicon of the literary language did not correspond to any spoken variety of Finnish. It represented a mixture of inherited Western and newly added Eastern vocabulary, mainly from dialects heavily deviating from the old literary language on every level. Furthermore, many Swedish loanwords and internationalisms that were commonplace in all of the Finnish dialects were now replaced with artificially created neologisms on the basis of dialectal vocabulary and derivative suffixes. The knowledge of previously non-existent words for concepts such as fork, hospital, jail, circle, person, assume, develop, etc. became a sign of 'good language use,' and as such it was required in all schools. At the same time, schoolchildren were told that the local words used for these and other concepts were not 'good Finnish,' and they were discouraged from using them.

The emerging literary language thus increasingly diverged from all spoken varieties of Finnish. The standard spoken and written Finnish is, on the one hand, a construct and, on the other hand, a compromise between the dialects.[100] It is practically no one's native language, being quite different from spoken everyday varieties of Finnish, and as such it is to some extent incomprehensible to everyone without a formal education.[101] The existence

99 Pulkkinen (1994).

100 Piippo et al. (2016: 157–158).

101 Similar ideas have been expressed, for instance, by Leino (2002). Note that some people apparently learned standard Finnish as a first language during the Fennoman movement and even until the mid-20th century (Paunonen 2017).

of two rather different types of Finnish, literary and spoken, is also a problem for the instruction of Finnish as a second language. Special learning books on spoken Finnish are needed to familiarize students with the way it is used in oral interaction.[102] Such a state of affairs is typically characteristic only of literary languages with a very old tradition (for instance, Arabic).

For the purpose of establishing and controlling the norms of Finnish language, active language planning has been practiced since the 19th century. A linguistic committee was established by the Finnish Literature Society already in the 1860s. Beginning in the 1940s, the responsibility for language planning and the governing of the norms of the standard language have been the responsibility of a state-run organization. In the 1970s, this fell under the aegis of the newly established Institute for the Languages of Finland.[103] The norms regarding the formal and conceptual systems of the standard language are governed to ensure that the standard language serves the communicative needs of the whole population, but this also ensures that the standard language provides the grounds for national unity.

From the perspective of language ideologies and linguistic culture, it is interesting to investigate the arguments used when a particular morphological or lexical form is preferred in the literary standard. In these cases, the argument of 'original Finnishness' often surfaces in a similar manner as the aspiration to avert 'foreign' influences (although, from a historical perspective, it is quite hard to say what original Finnish would be in terms of syntax, for example). The argument of the older age of the form is often put forward, and structures deviating from Swedish have clearly been given priority.[104] It needs to be noted, though, that analysis of the critical argumentation of the values behind language planning in Finland still remains to be carried out in future research.

Quite interestingly, the Language Board (or *Kielilautakunta*, the official body governing the norms of the standard language) is often criticized for being too tolerant toward dialectal and substandard features. For instance, the Institute for the Languages of Finland decided in 2014 to accept the colloquial construction *alkaa tekemään* ('to start doing') as part of the standard language. For about 100 years, the sole accepted construction in the standard language for the corresponding meaning had been *alkaa tehdä*. Although this change only introduced a common variety to the standard language and did not replace the construction that had been in use up until then, there was an unprecedented uproar in public discussion and in the media commenting on this change, both for and against.[105]

The discussion that followed suggests that Finns are quite conscious of the normativity of the standard language but also that many language users are keen to protect that normativity. As an example, the main editor of the leading newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* was quick to declare that they would

102 Lauranto (2007).
103 Kolehmainen (2014).
104 See Kolehmainen (2014: 159–164), who presents other arguments often used in the Finnish language planning discussion.
105 Piippo et al. (2016: 147–149).

continue using only the old standard, that is, *alkaa tehdä*.[106] Such reactions reflect conservative ideas about language planning. It is felt that if the norms are loosened, it will weaken the authority of language planning, lead to uncertainty among language users, and potentially create an appearance that the community is unstable.[107]

Standard language and linguistic minorities

Under nationalism especially, territorially clustered linguistic minorities have often been considered as a threat to national identity and the unity of the state.[108] As a result, they have tended to be repressed on linguistic grounds. While many Finns quite probably felt themselves as representative of a small minority increasingly threatened and oppressed by Russification toward the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this did not translate into compassion toward even smaller minorities once Finnish independence was achieved. As a dominant culture, Finnishness began – and has been – largely assimilating Karelian-speakers, the Saami, the Romani and other linguistic minorities.[109] This has been in sharp contrast to treatment of Swedish-speakers, the old majority population, guaranteed far-reaching linguistic rights already in the first language law (1922) of independent Finland, which is considered as one of the fundamentals of Finnish statehood.

The case of the Karelian-language speakers is especially interesting because of the important role of Karelian culture in the Finnish national romantic self-identity. Despite the small number of Karelian-speakers in Finland proper – they constitute 1% of the pre-war Finnish population and even less in modern Finland – Karelian culture was actively appropriated in constructing the Finnish national identity. This was most obvious in the case of the *Kalevala*, which transformed Karelian folk poetry into a European nationalist epic. The same nationalistic interest regarding Karelian culture was also apparent in 19th- and early 20th-century arts and architecture, which used many elements of Karelian origin, such as ornaments, scenery, and mythology.[110]

Karelian culture was, however, strongly evaluated in terms of the amount of Russian influences vis-á-vis its 'original' and 'Finnish' character. This evaluation was carried out even though many of the 'Finnish' features of Karelian culture were absent in the Finnish-speaking area. In many early writings about life in Karelia – which, for the most part, was never a part of Finland proper – the local people were condemned for using Russian clothing, and where they appeared to know Karelian folk poetry, this was considered a notable value in the otherwise heavily Russified environment.[111]

In the independent Finland of the 1920s and 1930s, the Orthodox Karelian population was under suspicion of being oriented toward Russia.

106 *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 5, 2014.
107 Piippo et al. (2016: 161, 164).
108 Brubaker (2013: 13).
109 Tunkelo (1902: 56); Onikki-Rantajääskö (2013: 83).
110 See Sihvo (1969).
111 Ervasti (1880).

Their language, which was practically unintelligible for a layman Finn from western regions, was labelled the 'Finnish dialect of Eastern Karelia,'[112] and the population was subjected to severe Fennicization, especially in the schools that spread the Finnish literary language and 'mainstream' Western Finnish culture. These practices were also carried out in the Karelian-speaking areas occupied by the Finnish army in the Second World War (1941–1944).

In the national narrative, Karelia needed to be 'freed' from Russian political and cultural influence, even though in many respects the Karelian culture can be characterized as Orthodox Northern Russian village culture. Finnish activists took part in two military interventions in the Karelian-speaking areas of Russia in the early 1920s, and during the Second World War the freedom of the Karelian people was set as a chief goal of state politics. However, ensuring that Karelian speech habits were free of Russian influences actually meant getting rid of much of the everyday vocabulary and replacing it with Swedish borrowings and Finnish neologisms. The politics of Fennicization were also supported by some Lutheran chaplains, who tended to justify the war on biblical grounds, even applying to Karelia the prophetic rhetoric of a promised and holy land.[113] Similar rhetoric was reflected in the orders of Finland's commander-in-chief, Field Marshal Carl Mannerheim, who referred to the invasion of Russia as 'the holy war' and a 'crusade.'[114]

Thus, despite the undeniable importance of Karelia in the creation of Finnish national identity, at the same time the elements of Karelian culture were actively depicted as the Eastern 'other' in school teaching, local histories, and tourism-related materials.[115] This kind of Karelianness had meaning as an exotic element of regional Finnish culture but not so much for its own sake.

As for the Saami people, a major areal linguistic majority in northern Finland, they were brought under the national education of Sweden in the 17th and the 18th centuries. Since the beginning of the nationalistic period in Finland, Finnish language and culture were promoted in the education of the Saami. Both the state and the Church showed clear assimilative tendencies toward the Saami, but the character and strength of the policy measures varied, often according to the teachers and priests who were in charge. During the 20th century, Saami speakers were often prohibited from using their language in boarding schools, which resulted in major language shift in the next generation. Analogous developments took place in Sweden and Norway.[116]

Despite the ethos of Reformation that the holy texts should be available in different languages, the first New Testament in a Saami language spoken in Finland only appeared as late as 1840, three hundred years after the Swedish and Finnish translations. What is more, the Finnish Lutheran Church did

112 Hakulinen et al. (1942).
113 Tilli (2012).
114 Supreme Commander's (Mannerheim) Order of the Day No. 1, June 1941.
115 Lähteenmäki (2009).
116 Oakes (2001); Keskitalo et al. (2016); Rasmus (2008).

not support this translation, which was initiated by the Norwegian Bible Society.[117] The full Bible in Northern Saami was published in 1895. Portions of the New Testament have been published in other Saami languages but not earlier than the 1970s. While writing this chapter, a new Bible translation in Northern Saami is underway, and it is expected to see the light of day in a few years. The full New Testament will also be translated to Inari Saami in the near future.

Given Luther's impetus to translate the Bible into vernaculars and the fact that hundreds of missionaries have been sent from Finland to foreign countries since the 1870s (also to engage in Bible translation), it is striking that the translation and production of religious literature in the languages of linguistic minorities in Finland began in many cases much later.

In independent Finland, the elements of Saami culture have been widely appropriated in a similar manner to Karelian culture. Saami dress, music, mythology, and shaman drums all appear in numerous art works – such as paintings, songs, and novels – as exoticized elements of the far north, and subsequently they have been used by the tourism industry to create an image of Finland. The fact that the Finnish-speaking population of Lapland is actually of recent origin and emerged mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries is not seen as a problem here, nor is the fact that the Saami culture was aggressively assimilated. Industrial forestry and the building of artificial lakes in Lapland destroyed much of the reindeer pastures and Saami livelihood, yet the tourism industry continues to view the Saami as an important part of the brand of Northern Finland. In the 21st century, discussions regarding these practices of cultural appropriation have become commonplace; for instance, the use of Saami dress by Finnish beauty queens and sportsmen, the use of Saami elements in art works with no apparent Saami context, etc. have all been criticized in both traditional and social media.

The process of more demonstrably improving the status of minorities in Finland began only in the 1970s, when foreign minorities started immigrating to the country.[118] Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the assumption of stronger orientation toward the rest of Europe, the Nordic countries have taken reconciliatory measures to improve the status of minorities, especially in the framework of European integration, most notably the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In Finland, the updated constitution (1995) acknowledges the Saami as an indigenous people possessing cultural autonomy (the Saami parliament). In addition, the state of Norway issued an apology to the Saami people in 1997; this was followed by the state of Sweden in 1998. In Finland, the Bishop of Oulu issued an apology to the Saami in 2012 for the repressive actions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. However, the Finnish government has not issued an apology and, unlike Norway recently, it has not ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

117 Tunkelo (1902).
118 Räsänen (2009: 2, 4).

Against the perceived egalitarianism of Finnish society and the status of the biggest minority linguistic group (Swedish), the state has been surprisingly uneasy about emancipating its linguistic minorities.

As a conclusion, there are several signs that Finnish became – and still is – sacred for nation-building and national identity in Finland. Language also seems to be the strongest criterion of national identity, even for the younger generations of Finns.[119] A distinct Swedish-speaking identity for Finns, representing the long tradition of Swedish language in statehood, was consciously constructed during the 19th century,[120] and it resulted in Finland becoming officially a bilingual state. But Finland-Swedish identity construction is still controversial: ethnically the Finland-Swedes have a kind of affinity to Sweden but their national identity is linked to Finland and has regionally distinct characteristics.[121] National identity has a complex nature, and it allows different ethnolinguistic groups multiple nested sub-national and regionally distinct identities.[122] It remains to be seen how Finland will manage to support the construction of such sub-national identities in the future, particularly as the society becomes increasingly pluralist at all levels.

Conclusion

In many world religions, a specific language can acquire sacred status. However, the relationship between language and religion is especially complex in the history of Christianity. Latin became a sacred language for the Catholic Church, but the Reformation replaced Latin as the sole sacred language of the Church and elevated vernaculars as the new 'vulgates.' The use of vernaculars is by no means unique to Christianity or Protestantism, although the extent to which they are promoted is perhaps unique. The Reformers' endorsement of vernaculars was not new in the Christian tradition. It was rather a return to the roots of early Christianity. However, the Reformation also paved the way for replacing religion with nationalism. The vernaculars shifted from rural languages to languages of religion and then to the core of nationhood in the modern era of nationalism. We argue that in this process the ideology of sacred language has secularized and continued to influence, for instance, language policies, attitudes toward the standard language, and attitudes toward linguistic minorities.

We further argue that the creation and maintenance of standard vernacular languages are analogous to the emergence and safeguarding of the conceptual systems, dogma, and sacred languages of religions. The core ideology in this regard is to maintain the purity of the linguistic form in order to safeguard the unity of the people. Critically, our analysis does not hang on the belief that nationalism is considered a religion or not, because the

119 See Finell et al. (this volume).
120 Gardner (2014).
121 Hedberg & Kepsu (2008).
122 Kaplan (1999).

concept of sacred can be applied to nationalism even if it is not considered a religion.

Nordic countries have a strong Lutheran heritage, and the development of the vernaculars into official written languages due to the Reformation is a uniting theme in the ways in which the historical narratives of the national identities in these countries have been framed.[123] This emancipation of the majority vernaculars, however, was not applied to the same degree to linguistic minorities in their spheres. While the status of the dominant vernaculars improved, the dominant culture tended to discriminate against linguistic minorities, especially in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. In doing so, the dominant culture has in effect repeated the linguistically discriminatory policies that the Nordic majority vernaculars themselves were largely subjected to in the pre-Reformation era – and, in the case of Finnish language, up until the 19th century.

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123 See Salonen (this volume).

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